



For Land's Sake!

Buchanan County Soil & Water

Conservation District

Spring 2103

"To Mow or Not To Mow?" That is the question! NITPICKING HABITAT MANAGEMENT – STOP THE "DEAD ZONE"

Most landowners start recreational mowing in June or July during the peak of the bobwhite quail and pheasant nesting season. In a good conservation effort, landowners will often mow around a quail or turkey nest. Rarely do the birds return. Look at a recently mowed field and there are not many places for a covey to hide. It's pretty easy to see why mowing entire fields are tough on wildlife, especially bobwhite quail. However, many people don't realize that mowing field edges – creating a **"Dead Zone"** – is also bad for quail.

The **"Dead Zone"** is often developed around the edges of fields next to good woody cover, fencerows or timber. Some landowners even create **"Dead Zones"** around food plots. Depending on the size of the mower and enthusiasm of the landowner, the **"Dead Zone"** is typically 20 to 60 feet wide.

A well-manicured **"Dead Zone"** can kill or deter quail any time of the year. During the spring and summer, mowing field edges can kill a devoted quail on the nest or even a fleeing brood of young birds. During the fall and winter, the mowed area can make quail more vulnerable to predators as the covey moves back and forth from covey headquarters to either feeding or roosting sites. Conditions can be exaggerated during periods of ice and snow since cover is often degraded during these critical times. To make matters worse, the constant mowing of the **"Dead Zone"** will promote the growth of tall fescue and smooth brome which will eventually contaminate the adjacent woody cover and grass field, making your best quail habitat worthless. If that isn't enough, remember that quail rarely venture more than 70 feet from woody cover, so mowing a **"Dead Zone"** destroys some of the most productive space for bobwhites.

Unfortunately for quail and many other grassland birds, people just like to mow. Often it is done for appearance or hunting access. Some landowners like mowed paths to walk along while hunting. A firebreak that is disked every two or three years provides just as easy walking. Others think summer mowing will help control woody sprouts. Summer mowing only cuts off the top of the sprouts, leaving sharp spikes for your ATV and truck tires. In a year or two the sprouts will be right back. If you are interested in seeing more quail consider these facts before starting up the mower.

Many people believe it is alright to mow in late July because quail are done nesting for the year. Research throughout the Midwest has shown that quail will attempt to nest well into September! With this year's cool start to spring, the peak quail hatch date will likely shift into mid-July this year. Another way to think about recreational mowing during the summer nesting season (May to September) is you might mow over a quail nest or brood that you didn't see. Now you will never see them come November.

Some landowners will say they are only making one or two passes around the edges of the fields – creating a **"Dead Zone"**. That can't hurt, or can it? A research project in southern Iowa found that bobwhites preferred to brood close to woody cover like edge feathering and shrub thickets, which are usually along the edge of the field. Mowing field edges likely destroys some of your best brooding cover for bobwhites.

If you are interested in bobwhites here are some recommendations:

1. Don't mow field edges.
2. Only mow field edges for fire line installation and only around those fields you plan to burn in the coming year. If possible, delay mowing fire lines until October, unless you plan a summer burn.
3. Consider disk or spraying field edges every three to four years. The disked or sprayed area will grow up in ragweed, foxtail and annual lespedeza – quail food.
4. If you must mow paths, move the path at least 70 feet out into the field to provide high quality nesting and brooding next to woody cover. Burn, disk or spray the area in between the woody cover and mowed path every two to three years. Remember, quail rarely venture more than 70 feet from woody cover during the winter.
5. If possible, consider moving your field road to the center of the field. Doing so will divide the field in half for alternating burn units.
6. Instead of mowing, create a long, linear food plot around the edge of the field for easy travel for you and a dependable food source and brooding cover for quail.
7. If you must mow, try to delay any mowing until October after the nesting season. Mow trails no shorter than one foot tall to provide adequate overhead cover for quail during the winter. There's no need for a 30 foot wide path if you only need a 10 foot path to drive along!
8. If you must mow, only mow the path once.

The next time you start up the mower, think twice before you create a "dead zone" in your quail paradise. Mowing field edges will likely destroy some of your best quail habitat and create future management problems. At all cost avoid the urge to mow whole fields or any mowing during the nesting season. Remember, a considerable amount of quail nesting still occurs in August and September when most people believe it is alright to start mowing. Think twice before you create a **"Dead Zone"**. For more information on wildlife management contact Jeff Powelson, Private Land Conservationist, @ 816-364-3662 ext. 122 or jeff.powelson@mdc.mo.gov

Buchanan County Poster Awards

Overall Winners:

1st Place Kailyn Guck, St. Francis Xavier

2nd Place Hannah Hayes, Pickett Elementary

3rd Place Jasmin Baltzer, St. Paul Lutheran

Honorable Mention Bella Smith, Cathedral



Picture of Jasmin Baltzer

Conservation Kid's Day

Conservation Kid's Day will be held on September 4th & 5th at the Mark Youngdahl Urban Conservation Area. 4th Grades from Buchanan County will learn about Aquatics, Soils, Wildlife, and Forestry.

Going Green



If you would like to receive our news letter and updates through your e-mail please contact us:

Buchanan County Field Office

816-364-3662 ext. 3

Cara.Hanway@swcd.mo.gov

Or visit our website:

<http://www.swcd.mo.gov/buchanan/index.html>

Mark Your Calendar

July 1st Beginning of
Fiscal Year 2014

July 4th Offices Closed

July 10th Board Meeting

August 7th Board Meeting

September 2nd Offices Closed

September 4th Board Meeting

September 4th & 5th

Conservation Kid's Day

October 2nd Board Meeting

October 14 Offices Closed

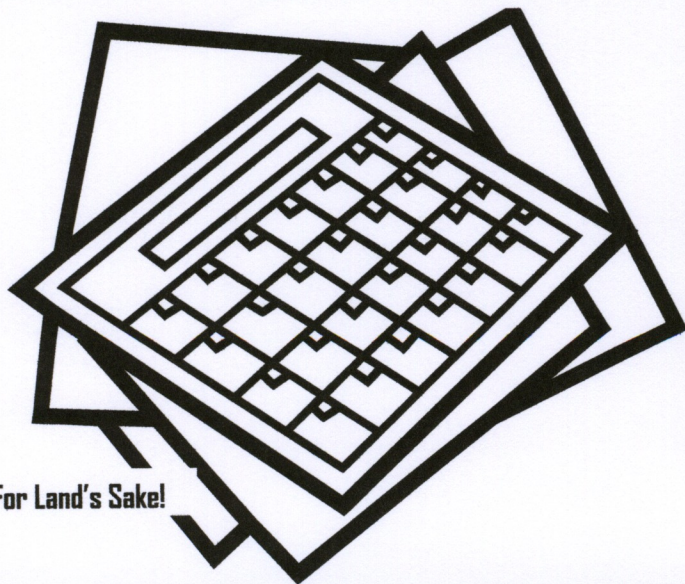
November 6th Board Meeting

November 11th Offices Closed

November 28th Offices Closed

December 4th Board Meeting

December 25th Offices Closed

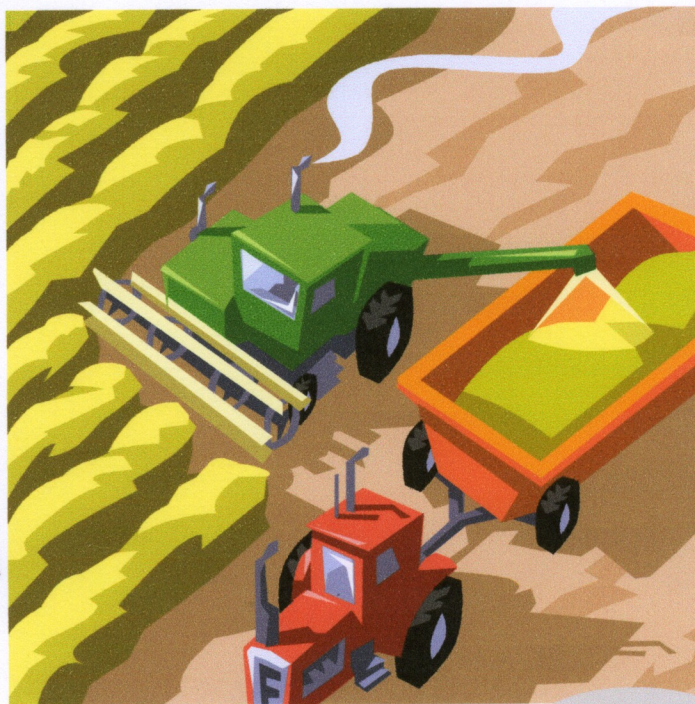


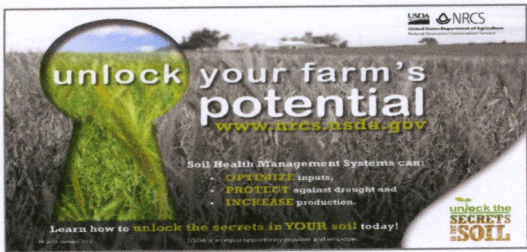
For Land's Sake!

Cost Share Funds

Buchanan County Soil &
Water Conservation District has
received **\$258,300.00** in Cost Share
Funds for ***Fiscal Year 2014*** that
began ***July 1st***.

These funds are for
approved Conservation Practices
which include terraces, diversions,
waterways, pasture, grazing
systems, spring development,
filter strips and field borders.





Soil and Organic Matter

Erosion control is not enough?

Soil conservation policy in the United States stems from the devastating erosion events of the 1920s and '30s. Out of concern for preserving agricultural productivity came the concept of tolerable soil loss and the creation of the T factor, which is the maximum annual soil loss that can occur on a particular soil while sustaining long-term agricultural productivity. Conservationists focused on reducing soil loss to T by applying practices, such as terraces, contour strips, grassed waterways, and residue management.

By the end of the twentieth century, concerns about air and water quality became as important as concerns about agricultural productivity. To address these environmental goals and maintain the land's productive potential, we must now go beyond erosion control and manage for soil health. How soil functions on every inch of a farm, not just in buffers or waterways, affects erosion rates, agricultural productivity, air quality, and water quality. The most practical way to enhance soil health today is to promote better management of soil organic matter or carbon. In short, we should go beyond T and manage for C (carbon).

Why focus on soil organic matter?

Many soil properties impact soil health, but organic matter deserves special attention. It affects several critical soil functions, can be manipulated by land management practices, and is important in most agricultural settings across the country. Because organic matter enhances water and nutrient holding capacity and improves soil structure, managing for soil carbon can enhance productivity and environmental quality, and can reduce the severity and costs of natural phenomena, such as drought, flood, and disease. In addition, increasing soil organic matter levels can reduce atmospheric CO₂ levels that contribute to climate change.

Go beyond T - Manage for C

The goal of reducing soil erosion to T (tolerable soil loss rates) generated remarkable improvements in the nation's natural resources (Figure 2)*. However, the pace of erosion control has slowed as we approach the goal of managing to T. Annually, 1.8 billion tons of soil are still lost from cropland, and 120 million acres of cropland are eroding at a rate greater than T.



Soil and Organic Matter

We can achieve a new level of soil conservation by focusing on building soil organic matter or soil carbon (C). By emphasizing practices to manage organic matter, soil loss can be reduced on those lands that still suffer excessive erosion. If all cropland were managed to T, annual soil loss would decline by 0.85 billion tons. If all cropland were managed for C (SCI>0), soil loss would decline by 1.29 billion tons. Thus, conservation efforts could save an additional \$11 billion worth of soil annually (adjusted to 2011 dollars) by managing for C instead of managing to T. Reaching this higher standard is possible by focusing on different conservation tools and benefits.

Even moderate erosion rates can harm air quality, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Improving soil organic matter levels can further stabilize soil within fields and protect environmental quality. Keeping soil in place is only the beginning of soil conservation. Soil also has to function well. It must hold nitrogen, phosphorus, and pesticides in place and keep them out of surface water. Soil must deliver nutrients and water to plants as they need them. Soil should minimize the effects of floods and droughts. Organic matter helps soil perform all these functions.

What does this mean for conservation?

Managing for C means using well-known technology in a new way. By addressing conservation issues from the perspective of soil organic matter instead of erosion, the focus is on enhancing the soil as opposed to managing for tolerable degradation. The full potential of cover crops, crop rotations, and reduced tillage can be exploited to address conservation concerns. Moreover, managing for C provides additional on-site benefits and incentives for the landowner, creating greater motivation for the person making the ultimate decisions about managing the Nation's natural resources.

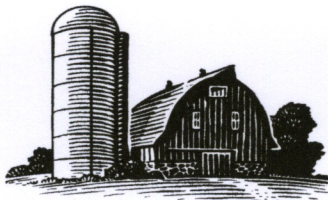
For more information on Soil Health please visit our website:
<http://www.swcd.mo.gov/buchanan/index.html>

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

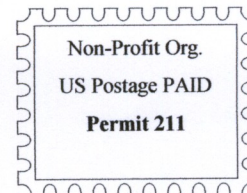
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2013 Buchanan County SWCD

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Conservation Districts
Conserving America



TO: Current Resident or

Dates To Remember

1st Wednesday of each month—
Buchanan County SWCD
Board Meeting—
USDA Service Center,
3915 Oakland Ave,
St. Joseph, MO 64506
Open to the Public
(Please call ahead if you plan
to attend)

***This newsletter is funded by the
Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax
through the Missouri Department
of Natural Resources.***

For Land's Sake!

Buchanan County SWCD Board Members

Donald Jordan - Chairman 6260 SE Riverside Terrace St. Joseph MO 64507	Casey Spencer -Vice Chairman 487 Sampson Rd Faucett MO 64448
Bernard Chesnut - Treasurer 17192 SE 115th Rd Edgerton MO 64444	Robert Kelly - Secretary 4125 Mitchell Ave. St. Joseph MO 64507
Member—Gary Waller 13321 SW St Route V Faucett, MO 64448	

Buchanan County Field Office

Correy Adkins District Technician	Rodney Saunders District Conservationist
Cara Hanway District Manager	Mary Beth Jungk Resource Conservationist
Joshua Davis Soil Conservationist	Terry Rouse Soil Technician
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